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## FALSE METHODS OF INTERPRETATION.

BY PROFESSOR SYLVESTER BURNHAM, D. D.,

Hamilton Theol. Seminary, Hamilton, N. Y.

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### II. INTERPRETATION WITH A DOUBLE SENSE.—*Concluded.*

The considerations that are urged to justify Double-Sense interpretations, may be classified under four heads.

1. It is said that Scripture sometimes admits of a double sense. The Bible is a spiritual book addressed to spiritually minded men. It means, therefore, all that a soul with spiritual discernment sees in it. If such a soul discerns a double sense in it, and can find that any of its words will bear a twofold meaning, this double sense is its true sense.

The reply is evident. Some pious souls have found a threefold, or a fourfold, meaning in the Bible. They have even claimed that all possible senses are to be taken as true senses, because they must have been foreseen by the Holy Spirit. Thus Augustine says, *De Doct. Christ.*, III. (as quoted by Canon Farrar), “*Ille quippe auctor in eisdem verbis quae intelligere volumus, et ipsam sententiam forsitan vidit, et certe Dei Spiritus \* \* \* etiam ipsam occurrentiam lectori praevidit, immo ut occurreret \* \* \* sine dubitatione providit.*” (“The author himself perhaps saw, in the words we are trying to interpret, the same sense; and certainly the Spirit of God foresaw that this sense would occur to the reader, and doubtless provided that it might occur.”) Indeed, the interpreter who sees, by his spiritual insight, a double sense in the Scriptures, could logically make little objection to the view of the Jewish Midrashists, who claimed that the Scripture is capable of indefinite interpretations; some said, of 49, and others, of 70. But is this the kind of a book the Bible is? Does it mean one thing, or, rather, some things, to one man, and other things to another? Has it some senses for the Christian consciousness (to employ a much abused term) of one age, and more, or less, and other senses for another age in the life of the church? And are all these senses equally a true sense of its language? Are they equally true senses when they are inconsistent with one another, and when those of one age or one man are contradictory to others from other ages or other men? Could there be a clearer *reductio ad absurdum* than that for which this hypothesis of a double sense opens the way? Even did this absurd result less show the falsity of the hypothesis, there is another side of the reply yet remaining. This is a denial of the fact. Scripture, if it is revelation or teaching for men, does not admit a double sense, either on account of spiritual discernment, or any other kind of discernment. For, if it had a double sense, it would either be a riddle, or not for men, being written in an unknown tongue.

2. The second argument is much like the first. It runs somewhat thus: The worth and usefulness of Scripture are increased by the possession of a double sense. But it was the intent of God to give to his Word the highest possible usefulness and worth. Therefore, the Scriptures must be taken as having the double sense.

The reply is a denial of both premises. It is not so certain that God intended his Word to have the *highest possible* worth and usefulness, in the sense of this expression as employed in this argument. It may be a condition of our probation that we should have to be instructed by a Word of less than the highest possible worth and usefulness. Or the Word may come to be of the highest possible worth and usefulness in the true sense, by having less of worth and usefulness in the sense meant. All we can safely say about the matter, is that the Scriptures have such worth and usefulness as it has pleased God to give them. To attempt to define their value on *a priori* grounds, if it should be done by a free-thinker, would be called rationalism. But unpleasant names are not true arguments.

Again, it savors of the mode of thought with the unpleasant name, to say that a double sense increases the worth and usefulness of Scripture. On what grounds can such a conclusion be justified? Not surely by a study of the history of interpretation. That the Bible still commands the reverence and study of thoughtful men, after the double, and threefold, and seventyfold, meanings that have been, in pious but ignorant zeal, assigned to it, is one of the many proofs of its divine origin. But, if the evidence is not to be found in the history of the past, it is purely of a speculative character. In a matter of this sort, however, the speculative opinions of one man are as good as those of another. It is, indeed for any man, somewhat venturesome to attempt to tell, on *a priori* grounds, what sort of a Bible God would write.

3. The third argument applies to the Old Testament only; and is, therefore, of special interest to students of the Old Testament. But, if Old Testament passages are to be given a double sense for any reason, even though that reason had its origin in the peculiar place occupied by the Old Testament dispensation in the history of the kingdom of God, it would not be strange if the New Testament writers, following the method of the writings of the Old Testament, in which, from children, they were instructed, had given to many of their utterances a double sense in the same, or a similar way. In favor of this double sense in the Old Testament, it is argued that such a sense in the Old Testament gives to it a character in harmony with the general typical character of the Old Testament dispensation. The persons, objects, and facts, which are presented to us in the Old Testament, it is said often appear as having a double meaning and worth. What could be more natural than that the language which sets before us these persons, objects, and facts, should, like them, be used in a double sense?

The reply is that, as we saw in studying in relation to the reason for thinking that there are types in the Old Testament, there is a natural basis for the typical meaning which was, by the divine intent, given to persons, objects, and facts in the time of the Old Testament dispensation. But there is no such basis, and, in fact, no basis at all for giving a double sense to the words and sentences of human speech, unless one has a riddle to put forth, or a pun to make. It would not, therefore, be in harmony with the typical character of the Old Testament dispensation to assign a double sense to its language. For the typical meaning is natural and reasonable, and the double sense is unnatural and impossible. There would be as much harmony between light and darkness.

4. The fourth reason might seem, at the first glance, to be a strong one. It is claimed that the New Testament writers, in quoting from the Old Testament, use Old Testament passages in a double sense. But the New Testament writers must be accepted, it is also said, in their interpretation of Old Testament pas-

sages, as authorities to be trusted, and as guides to be followed; for they wrote and interpreted as inspired of God. It would be almost inevitable, it is clear, that men who thus used the language of the Old Testament, and believed that inspiration had in the past employed the double sense as a means of instruction, should not altogether refrain from utilizing for themselves this same possibility of speech, as a means of inspired teaching.

But do the New Testament writers use Old Testament passages in a double sense? Some have claimed, for example, that Matthew, in his quotation from Hosea 11:1, of the words "Out of Egypt did I call my son" (Matt. 2:15, R. V.), has given a second, and so a double, sense to the words of the prophet. But this claim is no more than an unfounded assumption. In this case, and in all like cases, it is much more natural to suppose that the New Testament writer saw, in an event in the history of the chosen people, of which is salvation, a type and prophecy of some event in the life of Him who was the embodiment of all that was really, and at the same time ideally, Israelitish. If, now, to this typical interpretation of the Old Testament, we add the fact that the New Testament writers sometimes use the language of the Old Testament, not by way of quotation, with the intent of preserving the meaning expressed by the author, but as familiar and appropriate language in which to express ideas of their own, we seem to be relieved, and for the best of reasons, from the necessity of resorting to the double sense, to explain the use of Old Testament passages in the New Testament. But, did not the facts now presented satisfactorily explain all the New Testament interpretations that are alleged to assign a double sense to the Old Testament, sound interpretation could not, for a moment, hesitate to adopt the theory of a false exegesis on the part of the New Testament writers, rather than to admit the truth of the notion of a double sense. It would be far better, far more scientific, far more reverent and religious, to say that the apostles were not raised, by inspiration, above the scientific knowledge and methods of their day. Therefore, since Hermeneutics is a science, and exegesis a scientific process, the exegetical method of the New Testament writers was not a final method, and is not, in all respects, authoritative, nor free from all error. So that the New Testament teachings are the thought of God; but men have illustrated and defended them to their contemporaries after the manner of their own time. This theory would, at least, still leave the Bible a book to be read and understood, authoritative, final, and divine in its teachings and doctrines. But the theory of a double sense gives us what is a Bible in name, but is, in reality, a conundrum to be guessed, with nobody to tell us the answer, when, in our despair, we "give it up."

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### PROFESSOR WEIDNER'S LISTS.

BY REV. PROF. JOHN P. PETERS, PH. D.,

P. E. Divinity School, Philadelphia, and University of Pennsylvania.

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At the request of Prof. Harper, I have examined the two lists of books presented by Prof. Weidner in the December number of *THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT*, and prepared a similar list from a different point of view. For convenience of comparison I have followed the arrangement adopted by Prof. Weidner. I have not, however, thought it wise to make two lists. If the person has but \$200 to spend, he cannot spend \$300, which is what Prof. Weidner's two lists